

ARTHUR MURRAY STUDIO
((Danceworld))
1200 N. Hartford Street
Arlington
Virginia

HABS VA-1283
VA-1283

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

ARTHUR MURRAY STUDIO (Danceworld)

HABS No. VA-1283

Location: 1200 N. Hartford Street, Arlington County, Virginia. The building is no longer extant.

Significance: The Arthur Murray Studio building was one of the low-scale commercial buildings constructed in Clarendon in the first half of the twentieth century. Buildings from this era were primarily made of masonry and were only one or two stories in height. The building housing the dance studio was part of the development of Clarendon as the county's first commercial center in the 1930s and 1940s. It was during these years that national retail chains joined the local retailers in opening up stores in Clarendon. The central shopping district drew patrons from the commuter villages of East Falls Church, Cherrydale, and Ballston as well as from the neighboring residential streets in Clarendon itself. The commercial nexus in Clarendon also helped Arlington coalesce into a single, county-wide community.¹

Description: Built in 1947, this two-story, asymmetrical structure was made of concrete block. Despite its irregular massing, the building had a rectangular footprint. It faced east, and the center entrance was flanked by windows walls of unequal height. The building was covered by a flat roof, which was hidden behind a parapet.²

History: Originally the building housed the Arthur Murray Studio. Later, it was occupied by Danceworld.³ Despite (or because of) its location within the bustling Clarendon commercial district, the building was demolished in 1990.

The parcel was developed by Clarendon Properties, a company led by William Cohen who served as its President. Cohen's brother Charles was the company's Secretary. In 1951 the Cohen brothers entered into a deed of trust, and then transferred the company's interest in the property to themselves.⁴ They held onto

¹ Evidence of this, for example, is in the location of the Arlington Post Office in Clarendon. See Betty Bird, "Arlington Post Office," Nomination 1985, National Register of Historic Places, National Park Service.

² Clarendon Historic Property Survey (CHPS No. 112), on file in the Arlington County Historic Preservation Division. The survey was conducted in 1986.

³ The Clarendon Historic Property Survey file noted Arthur Murray as the first tenant of the building; by 1955 the dance studio moved out of Clarendon to 800 N. Taylor Street. In this year (1955) the building at 1200 N. Hartford was occupied by Admiral One Hour Dry Cleaning; in 1957, and again in 1959, the building was vacant. *Hills Arlington County (Virginia) Directory 1955* (Richmond: Hill Directory Co., Inc., 1955); *Hills Arlington County (Virginia) Directory 1957* (Richmond: Hill Directory Co., Inc., 1957); *Hills Arlington County (Virginia) Directory 1959* (Richmond: Hill Directory Co., Inc., 1959). Danceworld likely was the tenant when the survey was conducted in 1986.

⁴ Arlington County Land Records, Deed Book 1166, p. 314; Arlington County Land Records, Deed Book 1013, p. 93. The deed of trust references two leases made in December 1947 (the year the building was built), one to Virginia

it for a number of years, finally selling to William and Elizabeth Powell in 1964.⁵ The Powells conveyed the property to Hartford Association Ltd. in April 1990.⁶

Located at the east end of the Clarendon commercial district, near the Hahn Shoe Building (HABS No. VA-1281) and the Lerner Department Store (HABS No. VA-1282), the Arthur Murray Studio was one of several nationally recognized businesses that set up shop in Clarendon during the 1940s. The influx of prominent chain stores coincided with an increase in the population of the greater metropolitan Washington area during the war years and immediately afterwards. Growth was sustained in the postwar years, and Clarendon ultimately became part of the metro corridor. Construction of the metro rail lines began in the 1960s and continued through the 1970s, disrupting trade patterns and streetscapes as the tunnel was built. In the ensuing decade, particularly after the fall of Saigon in 1975, many Southeast Asians relocated to the area and subsequently opened shops in Clarendon's commercial buildings, bringing new life to the business corridor that first emerged along Wilson Boulevard after the trolley lines went in during the 1900s and burgeoned in the 1930s and 1940s with national chain stores.

Electric and Power Company and the other to Daniell Incorporated (demising the storeroom and basement). The brothers, first in business together as Clarendon Properties later re-incorporated as Will-Charles Properties, Inc., with that entity briefly assuming control over the parcel in the early 1960s. Arlington County Land Records, Deed Book 1431, p. 515.

⁵ The deed of sale was dated December 1964 and was recorded in January 1965. Arlington County Land Records, Deed Book 1572, p. 488.

⁶ Arlington County Land Records, Deed Book 2428, p. 1175; Arlington County Land Records, Deed Book 2428, p. 1177.